

United States Senate

COMMITTEES:
BANKING, HOUSING
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

June 10, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As part of an overall strategy to strengthen moderate opposition forces in Syria, I strongly encourage you to begin providing lethal aid to appropriately vetted elements of the Syrian opposition at the earliest possible time. This effort should also include training and capacity building to enhance the moderate opposition's ability to be a reliable security partner, both now and in the future. Nearly three weeks ago, the Foreign Relations Committee approved legislation to take these steps in an overwhelmingly bipartisan 15-3 vote.

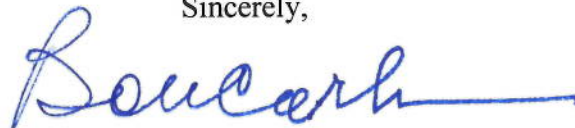
For over two years, this conflict has raged with hugely destructive consequences for U.S. security interests, the people of Syria and the region. While the United States helped at the margins with humanitarian aid, we have yet to take decisive action to support the opposition, even though our national policy has long been that Assad must go. Our indecision has allowed extremist elements to gain the upper hand within the opposition, while Assad remains in power buttressed by Iran and its proxy army, Hezbollah.

While I do not support American boots on the ground in Syria at this time, we cannot stand on the sidelines and risk Syria falling to extremists who are allied with Al Qaeda. Acting now and offering lethal aid directly to our allies in the opposition will shift momentum away from radical Islamist groups, the Assad regime and its militias toward more moderate elements and could help alter the balance of power on the ground at a time when negotiations over a political settlement have stalled.

We must also prepare for the future by establishing common cause between moderate Sunnis, Alawites and others against radical Sunnis and Iranian proxies. We must also ensure Syria's chemical weapons are secured and work to stem the flow of fighters and weapons into neighboring countries. We failed to do the latter in Libya, and the consequences have been catastrophic.

As you face a critical policy decision on Syria this week, I encourage you to look to the bipartisan consensus created by this committee three weeks ago.

Sincerely,



Bob Corker